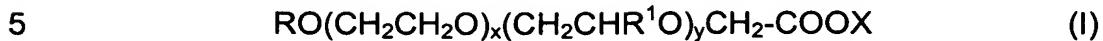


CLAIMS

1. The use of ether carboxylic acids corresponding to general formula (I):



in which R is a saturated or unsaturated, branched or unbranched alkyl or alkenyl group containing 6 to 22 carbon atoms, x is a number from 1 to 20 and y is 0 or a number from 1 to 20, providing that the sum of x and y is at

10 least 1 and at most 25, and R^1 is an alkyl group containing 1 to 4 carbon atoms and X is a hydrogen atom or a monovalent or polyvalent anion, in drilling fluids.

2. The use claimed in claim 1, characterized in that the ether carboxylic acids of formula (I) are used as emulsifiers in drilling fluids which contain at least one aqueous phase and one nonaqueous phase.

3. The use claimed in claims 1 and/or 2, characterized in that the ether carboxylic acids are used as emulsifiers in drilling fluids which form a water-in-oil or oil-in-water emulsion.

4. The use claimed in claims 1 to 3, characterized in that the ether carboxylic acids are used in water-based emulsion drilling fluid systems which contain esters of saturated or unsaturated, branched or unbranched monocarboxylic acids containing 1 to 24 carbon atoms with monohydric, linear or branched, saturated or unsaturated alcohols containing 1 to 24 carbon atoms, as the oil phase.

25 5. The use claimed in claims 1 to 4, characterized in that the ether carboxylic acids are used in water-based emulsion drilling fluid systems which contain linear α -olefins, internal olefins and/or paraffins as the oil phase.

30 6. The use claimed in claims 1 to 5, characterized in that ether carboxylic acids of formula (I), in which y represents 0, are used.

7. The use claimed in claims 1 to 6, characterized in that ether

carboxylic acids corresponding to formula (I), in which x is a number from 1 to 15, preferably 1 to 10 and more particularly 1 to 8, are used.

8. The use of ether carboxylic acids claimed in claims 1 to 7, characterized in that the ether carboxylic acids are used in quantities of 0.1 to 25% by weight, preferably 0.1 to 10% by weight and more particularly 0.1 to 5% by weight, based on the weight of the drilling fluid.

5 9. The use claimed in claims 1 to 8, characterized in that free fatty acids are used in addition to the ether carboxylic acids of formula (I).

10. A well servicing composition flowable and pumpable at 5 to 20°C which is based on a continuous oil phase in admixture with a limited quantity of a disperse aqueous phase (w/o invert type) and contains optionally dissolved and/or dispersed standard auxiliaries, such as thickeners, fluid loss additives, wetting agents, fine-particle weighting agents, salts, alkali reserves and/or biocides, characterized in that it 15 contains the compounds corresponding to formula (I) in claim 1.

11. A well servicing composition as claimed in claim 10, characterized in that the oil phase is selected from the classes of

(a) carboxylic acid esters corresponding to formula (II):

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where R' is a saturated or unsaturated, linear or branched alkyl group containing 5 to 23 carbon atoms and R'' is an alkyl group 25 containing 1 to 22 carbon atoms, which may be saturated or unsaturated, linear or branched,

(b) linear or branched olefins containing 8 to 30 carbon atoms,
(c) water-insoluble, symmetrical or nonsymmetrical ethers of monohydric alcohols of natural or synthetic origin which may contain 30 1 to 24 carbon atoms,
(d) water-insoluble alcohols corresponding to formula (III):

$R'''-OH$

(III)

where R''' is a saturated, unsaturated, linear or branched alkyl group

5 containing 8 to 24 carbon atoms,

- (e) carbonic acid diesters,
- (f) paraffins,
- (g) acetals.